

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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EMS TRANSMISSION 3-15-2000
Instruction Memorandum No. NV-2000-034
Expires: 9/30/2001

To: Field Managers, Nevada

From: Deputy State Director, Natural Resources, Lands & Planning

Subject: Land Health Standards Evaluation Process **DD: 9/30/200; 9/30/2001**

This memorandum is a follow-up to the February 7-8, 2000, State Leadership Team (SLT) meeting discussion of incorporating established land health standards into our Land Use Plans (LUPs) for all activities on public lands to meet the goals of one of the National Performance Measures. As of March 1, 2000, the National Performance Measure addressing comprehensive land health standards has been revised (the complete set of revised Performance Measure Data Specifications is available on the BLM Intranet on the WO Budget Library page). The new performance measure is now **“Number of Land Use Plans Evaluated (cumulative).”** Under “Guidelines for Data Collection,” it is clearly stated that incorporation of comprehensive land health standards into land use plans is BLM policy. Refer to Attachment 3.

As a result of this revision in the Performance Measure, there is no longer a requirement to have comprehensive land health standards incorporated into all LUPs by the end of this fiscal year. The BLM is, however, on an accelerated schedule to have all LUPs evaluated by 2002. To this end, the approach we will use in Nevada will be to incorporate, to the extent practicable, land health standards into our LUPs through the plan evaluation process and subsequent plan maintenance. This will be accomplished through a process of review and documentation of consistency of LUP decisions with the existing land health standards for the applicable Resource Advisory Council (RAC) area. The assessment of the standards with the LUP decisions should be accomplished through an interdisciplinary team of appropriate resource specialists.

If the evaluation results in a determination that certain LUP decisions are inconsistent with the established land health standards, the LUP resource or program area may require a new standard be developed (as coordinated through the RAC process) and applied to that resource concern.

Inconsistencies identified through this plan evaluation process will be considered a plan deficiency.

Incorporation of new standards to be applied will be accomplished through development of subsequent activity or implementation plans, as appropriate. Overall plan deficiencies will be corrected through plan amendments or plan revisions, as prioritized and scheduled through the AWP process and Director's planning schedule.

All plan evaluations incorporating land health assessments for FY 99 and FY 2000 are due to NSO by 9/30/2000. For those LUPs scheduled for evaluation in FY2001 and subsequent out-years, the land health standard assessment should be accomplished in conjunction with the scheduled plan evaluation.

As a reminder, the following plan evaluations are established through the State Director's Land Use Plan Evaluation Schedule (I.M. NV-99-044 (7/16/99)).

Land Use Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Schedule (FY99 - FY02)

FY99: Paradise-Denio MFP (NV020)
Egan RMP (NV040)
Shoshone-Eureka RMP (NV060)

FY00: Elko RMP (NV010)
Caliente MFP (NV040)
Sonoma-Gerlach MFP (NV020)

FY01: Lahontan RMP (NV030)
Schell MFP (NV040)

FY02: Wells RMP (NV010)
Walker RMP (NV030)

Please direct any questions to Brian C. Amme, Environmental Protection Specialist at (775) 861-6645.

Signed By:
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DSD, NRL&P

Authenticated By:
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3 Attachments:

1. Attachment 1 - Process to follow in accomplishing the land health standard assessment.(2 pp)
2. Attachment 2 Example format. (1 p)
3. Attachment 3 FY 2000/2001 National Performance Measure. (1 p)

Process for Incorporating Land Health Standards into Existing LUPs

Step 1: Determine the standards applicable to the planning area.

Because RAC areas, thus standards, are aligned along county boundaries, planning areas may overlap more than one RAC area. For example, the Egan RMP and Schell MFP share both the Northeastern and Mojave-Southern Great Basin Areas; while the Elko and Wells RMPs are wholly contained within the Northeastern Great Basin Area.

For each RAC area, the affected LUP decisions should be weighed against the approved land health standards for that RAC area only. For Performance Measures with more than one RAC area, application of appropriate land health standard to permits and use authorizations will be determined by which county the authorization is issued.

Step 2: Develop a worksheet or crosswalk table that best fits your needs to document whether the decisions are consistent with the Standards.

Field offices should develop a crosswalk table to reflect and accommodate the major activities with substantial potential for surface disturbance. Footnotes or additional columns may be used to describe proposed or recommended actions for incorporating the standards if they have not been addressed or if they are found to be in conflict. The table should provide a place to document rationale supporting the conclusion.

See Attachment 2 for an example format.

Step 3: Determine whether the LUP decisions are consistent with the applicable standard.

Crosswalk the approved land health standards against the most common types of surface disturbing activities for actions authorized under the LUP, to verify the standards would be applicable in discretionary activity or project plans, licenses, permits, grants, or other use authorizations. For example, an activity such as road construction would be weighed against the applicable standard and this should not vary across programs, as the determining factor is the environmental effect of the road, not its intended purpose.

The review should include all applicable programmatic activity plans such as noxious weed control, transportation, wild land fire, woodland products, etc.

Step 4: Incorporate this assessment into the scheduled LUP evaluation.

Refer to the FY 2000 AWP and State Director's Land Use Plan Evaluation Schedule (IM -NV-99-044). For those LUP evaluations due to the NSO for FY99, this assessment should be attached as a appendix so it is incorporated and documented into the overall LUP evaluation.

Land health standards determined to be consistent with and supported by the applicable plans and NEPA documents, will be integrated into the LUP through plan maintenance as a result of the plan evaluation process. Once incorporated, standards will be specifically referenced in subsequent activity, implementation or project plan decision records, findings of no significant impact, records of decision and use authorizations.

When assessing surface-disturbing activities for consistency with Land Health Standards, it is important to consider that Standards are not time-sensitive to short term disturbances only and in some cases, may not be appropriate. Land Health Standards express desired conditions and should also be weighed against long-term post-disturbance uses, reclamation standards and objectives.

FLPMA and other laws clearly anticipate and authorize uses which may not meet healthy land standards for a particular area at the time of development or use (e.g. mineral extraction areas, OHV intensive play areas, utility corridors and sites, forest and woodland harvest practices, natural and prescribed wild land fire disturbances). Land health standards are still applicable, however, in developing and meeting long-term reclamation, rehabilitation or restoration objectives.

Also, Standards developed thus far address the condition of the land and water quality. Standards may yet need to be developed which address issues such as air quality in relation to other land use decisions, surface disturbances, smoke and fire management.

EXAMPLE FORMAT

Standards Conformance Worksheet

Plan Name: Shoshone - Eureka RMP

RAC Area: North East Great Basin

Program Area: Forestry

| Standard ¹ | Plan Decision ² | Types of Use Authorizations ³ | Disturbance regime ⁴ | Conclusion/ Rationale ⁵ |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Standard 1. Upland sites: Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate and land form. | Manage approximately 600,000 acres of pinyon-juniper woodland for non-commercial sustained yield harvest of woodland products. | Post permits, firewood permits. | Dispersed OHV casual use, no road construction, localized temporary soil disturbance in area of activity. | Based on previous NEPA analyses for forest activity plans and similarly approved actions, these dispersed activities and localized impacts will not cumulatively affect attainment of this standard over the long-term. |

¹ List the applicable Standards.

² List applicable decisions from ROD.

³ List types of use authorizations for program /activity, even if plan contains no program-specific decisions in ROD.

⁴ List types of disturbances and impacts generally expected from the activity or use authorized.

⁵ Provide a conclusion or rationale whether the activity or uses authorized would prevent or be inconsistent with attainment of the Standard.

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| <p>FY 2000/2001 Performance Measure: Performance Goal Code: 02.01.02.01 Number of land use plans evaluated (cumulative)</p> |
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Definition: This measure reflects the cumulative (beginning in FY1999) number of land use plans (RMPs and MFPs) for which BLM has conducted comprehensive evaluations to determine if they reflect new circumstances and incorporate needed management strategies.

Contact Person: Ted Milesnick, WO-210 (202) 452-7727

Precision: Report the cumulative number of comprehensive evaluations completed.

Contributing (ABC) Program Elements: Program element DH (Land Use Plan Amendments or Revisions Completed) is related to this Performance Measure outcome.

System Interface: Director's Annual Planning Schedule

Data Elements Required: None

Guidelines for Data Collection: Offices should report comprehensive land use plan evaluations upon completion of the evaluation report. Evaluations must consider whether all land use plan decisions (including objectives, goals, standards, allocations, and program restrictions) and the associated NEPA analysis reflect new information and circumstances. New information and circumstances include but are not limited to: 1) new policy, regulation, or statute requirements, such as those for clean water and air, and **BLM's policy of having comprehensive land health standards incorporated into all land use plans.** 2) new listings for Threatened and Endangered species and the need to develop conservation strategies, 3) information gathered from resource assessments, 4) program requirements, such as the need to designate OHV areas, 5) an identified need to address special areas such as ACECs, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, and 6) increased resource demand that exceeds reasonable foreseeable development levels in the land use plan or NEPA document, such as oil and gas development.

Cursory evaluations that do not provide an in-depth, documented analysis should not be reported.

Baseline and Date: Cumulative evaluations completed beginning in FY 1999.